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Keeping the Fourth of July Safe

(MADISON, June 23, 2000) -- Each year in this country, almost 10,000 people--mostly children between the ages of 5 and 14--are treated in hospital emergency departments for fireworks-related injuries. Some two thirds of these injuries occur in July, coinciding with Independence Day celebrations. In Wisconsin, where fireworks are regulated by State and local laws, the majority of the injuries are due to burns from fireworks that are considered legal (e.g. bottle rockets, sparklers, firecrackers and Roman Candles.) Illegal explosives (e.g. M-80s, M-100s) or homemade fireworks cause the remaining 30 percent of fireworks-related injuries. These types of fireworks should never be used because they are so dangerous.

If fireworks are legal in your area and you choose to use them, keep the following suggestions in mind so that the experience is safer and reduces the risk of injuries. Even a sparkler can reach 1000 degrees Fahrenheit and can ignite the clothing of the person holding it. Also, Be aware of the effect the noise from fireworks may have on infants, small children, and pets--it can be very frightening.

ALWAYS...

- Check and adhere to local laws on sale and use of fireworks.
- Buy fireworks from a reliable dealer/outlet.
- Read and follow the label directions.
- Supervise older children—don't give small children fireworks.
- Have a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher handy in case of malfunctioning fireworks.
- Ignite fireworks outdoors away from houses and other flammable materials.
- Light only one at a time.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Dispose of fireworks properly.
- Store unused fireworks in a cool, dry place.

NEVER...

- Consume alcohol when using fireworks.
- Wear loose clothing while using fireworks.
- Place your face or any other body part over a fireworks device.
- Light fireworks near dry grass or leaves.
- Try to relight fireworks that have malfunctioned.
- Carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- Attempt to make firecrackers salutes at home.
- Make your own fireworks or devices

The best way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a professional display or fireworks show.

Most "accidents" are preventable. By keeping these fireworks safety tips in mind as the Fourth of July celebrations approach, you can avoid fireworks-related injuries and enjoy the "booms" in the night. For additional information on fireworks safety and injury prevention, visit:

www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/july4/safetip.html or www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dph_emsip/IPIndex.htm